



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1998
WWW.USDOJ.GOV

AT
(202) 616-2771
TDD (202) 514-1888

WILBUR-ELLIS COMPANY AGREES TO PLEAD GUILTY TO CRIMINAL CONTEMPT

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A San Francisco distributor of agricultural chemicals has agreed to plead guilty and to pay a fine of \$100,000 for criminal contempt, the Department of Justice said.

The one-count Information, filed today in U.S. District Court in Portland, charges Wilbur-Ellis Company Inc. with criminal contempt in connection with a grand jury investigation into possible violations of antitrust laws by companies engaged in the distribution of agricultural chemicals.

According to the charge, Wilbur-Ellis was served with a grand jury subpoena that required the company to produce documents related to price discussions between agricultural chemical distributors. As a result of Wilbur-Ellis' failure to properly supervise the production of documents in response to the grand jury subpoena, one of its employees destroyed documents that related to price discussions between Wilbur-Ellis and another agricultural chemical distributor.

"We take allegations of document destruction very seriously, because we cannot enforce the antitrust laws effectively unless people exercise care when responding to subpoenas," said Gary R. Spratling, Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Antitrust Division. "Today's case should send a message to companies that they must take more than just superficial steps to ensure that their employees come forward with documents called for by a grand jury subpoena."

Wilbur-Ellis distributes and sells agricultural chemicals in the Pacific Northwest.

Today's plea agreement is subject to approval by the court.

The case was filed by the Antitrust Division's San Francisco Field Office with the assistance of the Department of Agriculture's Western Region Office of the Inspector General.

###

98-455